

## A Mod Mod Kitchen

A top restaurant designer eighty-sixes the linoleum floors and red-locker cupboards in his Harrison kitchen, bringing in sleek cabinetry, modern appliances, and plenty of sunlight.

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The island in Glen Coben's light and bright kitchen is designed for eating and gathering rather than cooking and therefore has no sink. Four LEM Piston barstools allow the Cobens and guests to admire the view outside. A Sub-Zero stainless-steel side-by-side refrigerator sits next to a double oven by Bosch.

designed spaces for luminary chefs such as Barbuto's Jonathan Waxman, Babbo's Joseph Bastianich, and Marcus Samuelsson of Aquavit fame.

Not everyone can see beyond the green shag carpeting, overgrown foliage, and outdated kitchen appliances when they're searching for a home. But luckily, Glen Coben—the architect behind many area hotels and restaurants (including Washington Park and Del Posto in New York City and Avenida and Bleu in Greenwich, Connecticut)—has that design vision, a talent showcased in his celebrated work. And so, when Coben and his wife, Caren Low, were looking to buy 11 years ago, they were able to harness that talent for their own space, visualizing ways to update their contemporary Harrison ranch while still maintaining its integrity.

"The house was very dark and damp and brown when we moved in," he says. "We felt like it spoke to us and wanted to be lightened up."

Today, the home, which was built in 1954 and had belonged to friends of Low's parents (the Cobens are only its second residents), is so full of windows, so open and airy, one rarely needs to flick on a light switch. Of course, this being the home of a restaurant designer (Coben opened his architectural firm Glen & Company in April 2000, after years as a principal at the renowned Rockwell Group), the kitchen is the heart and soul.

There was no quick and easy recipe for transformation. "We wanted to live in the house for a bit before we changed anything," Coben explains. That meant living with a "very small, very Mike Brady-like kitchen" complete with red locker cabinets, old appliances, and a linoleum floor. There was no center island, no Sub-Zero refrigerator, and very little counter space—a bit of a shock for a man who, over the years, has

"I'm glad we waited," Coben says, "because some of our original thoughts weren't what we ultimately chose to do." Though the kitchen made sense in its original location (it was in the front of the house, directly off of the garage), the more Coben and Low lived in their home, the more they wanted to bring the outside in. And so they took what had been a screened-in porch toward the back of the house and turned it into the kitchen, moving the dining room to where the kitchen had once stood. They removed the pass-through that had existed before and added a small butler's pantry complete with a GE wine refrigerator, a Franke sink, a coffeemaker, a microwave, and cabinets. The piece d'resistance, however, is the expanse of glass that literally frames the entire back of the house: floor-to-ceiling double-pane sliding glass doors that let the outdoors stream in.

Though Coben likes to cook and often has his chef clients over when they're working on a project (think Bill Seleno of Manhattan's Summit restaurant and local chef Rafael Palomino of Port Chester's Pacifico and Sonora), his vision in remodeling this room was to let Mother Nature be the star of the show, with the kitchen details serving as the side act. In doing so, he let this room shine in an understated, very European way that's unlike most Westchester residences. There are no upper cabinets, no graphic backsplash, no visible microwave or can opener sitting on the counter (those functional but often unfashionable items are hidden in a pantry).



Glen Coben, his daughter, Maya, and dog, Mookie, take a breather at their kitchen's island.

Rather than create a room chock-full of showy appliances, the kitchen is one open space. The simple, clean designs surrounded by crisp, white walls don't fight with the colors of the changing seasons right outside the wall-to-wall windows. The cooktop (with a pop-up range exhaust) sits off to the side of the double-sink, the only space that has a bit of wall rather than a window behind it. The focal point of the room is a long island with a stunning white Carrera marble countertop. "Everyone said Carrera marble was a terrible idea for a kitchen," Coben recalls. But then he asked Mario Batali, who had just opened his Manhattan restaurant, Otto. Batali assured him that many pizzerias around the world use Carrera marble. "As long as you respect it and clean it, it will look as good as when first installed."



The kitchen is surrounded by an expanse of windows and glass doors that lead to an outdoor patio where the Cobens entertain during warmer months. A spare white table surrounded by Arne Jacobson's modern chairs make for an understated breakfast nook. A desk with room for two, complete with a flat-screen TV and a computer, allows the kitchen also to function as a workspace.

Framed by four chrome-and-brown LEM Piston barstools found at Design Within Reach, the island is "pure" in the sense that it has no sink, just space. "It was important to both of us to have an island that didn't have a sink," Coben stresses. "This is, after all, where we congregate and hang out."

Adding to this room's vast space: a breakfast nook with a circular table and modern chairs by Arne Jacobson. A double-sided desk adds to the room's efficiency (complete with small flat-screen TV and computer). "We wanted this to be a community work station," Low explains. On most days, it's here where you'll find 9-year-old daughter Maya doing homework while mom jots down notes or pays bills.

Everything appears to be thought out quite rationally. And, thanks to Coben's work with various five-star properties over the years, it is. "I'm big into thinking about the flow of a space—the logic of how the food gets to the dining room in a timely matter, where the dirty dishes go, how the table can be clear and so on," he says. The drawers and shelving, which hail from a German company called Bulthaup, are so efficient for storing utensils, it's hard to find a junk drawer (although Low assures there is one).

Down the road, he says Coben would like to get a skinnier desk for the kitchen and perhaps put in a different double sink, one that's not quite symmetrical. But those, like so many plans, are still on the drawing board. A fitting place, of course, for a designer who never sits still.



Extra-long drawers and plenty of storage ensure there's a place for everything.